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First Committee
14th meeting
Friday, 22 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman:: Mr. De Alba ..... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning the Committee will continue its consideration of conventional weapons. We will hear a presentation of draft resolutions and decisions that were left pending yesterday.

I call on the representative of Bulgaria to introduce draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I want to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. My delegation will certainly be cooperating with you to help ensure that the Committee completes its work successfully.

(*spoke in French*)

First of all, I would like to bring to the attention of the delegations, draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48, "Problems resulting from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus". It is my honour to introduce the draft on behalf of France and the Netherlands and my own delegation. The decision comes under agenda item 65 of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, entitled "General and complete disarmament".

The draft decision is simply procedural in nature. It contains only one paragraph, which provides for the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

It is the opinion of the sponsors that, in view of the serious problems resulting from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, the question deserves consideration by the Committee in the future. Military conflicts throughout the world have, among other things, resulted in the accumulation of large numbers of conventional explosive munitions, which poses a serious risk to security in different parts of the world.

The accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles could also create environmental problems, and could have an impact on civilian populations. Some countries find it difficult to ensure safe conditions for their stockpiles. That means that the stockpiles are easily accessible and thus vulnerable to theft or plundering. Given the serious threat that such munitions could fall into the hands of terrorists or other criminal groups, the sponsors of the draft decision believe it is important that the international community become aware of the complex nature of the problem and of its different facets, and that there be a discussion of ways and means to resolve that problem.

We also believe that the issue requires specific practical measures. From that standpoint, the

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instruments we have along with their regional mechanisms would be important in helping to find an appropriate response.

In December 2003, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a document on this same problem, which could perhaps be considered as a positive example in that regard.

The inclusion of the item in the agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly would make it possible to better inform the international community of the different aspects of the problem and would lead to an exchange of views on the various possible solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the colleagues who made comments and proposals on our initiative during the informal consultations we carried out. May I also express the hope of the three sponsors — Bulgaria, France and the Netherlands — that our draft decision will be adopted by consensus. Representatives who would like complete information regarding our initiative will find all the information they need in the non-paper available in the conference room.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): France and the Netherlands are sponsors of draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48, and I wish to reaffirm that my delegation is fully committed to that important draft decision, which has just been explained by my colleague from Bulgaria. We certainly want to pursue the matter further during the meetings of the First Committee next year.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nepal, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.20.

Mr. Pant (Nepal): As has been the case with similar texts in the past, it is my privilege to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors and under agenda item 66 (e), draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.20, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific".

I would also like to place on record our appreciation to the other sponsors for the kind support they have extended to my delegation in submitting the draft resolution. In keeping with the wish of the sponsors, this year's text has been amended only to the extent of reflecting the activities of the Centre carried out during the reporting period. The Secretary-General's report provided the necessary guidelines in that regard.

It is gratifying that the Centre has successfully organized important meetings and conferences, thereby contributing to fostering a climate of cooperation for peace and disarmament in the region. Indeed, the activities of the Centre in the Asia-Pacific region have led us to think long and hard about disarmament and confidence-building for lasting peace. However, the Centre has the potential to play a greater, more dynamic role in promoting arms control and disarmament activities at the regional and subregional levels, as envisaged in its mandate. Nepal is fully committed to hosting the Centre and to providing all necessary and reasonable support to it to enable it to function from the Nepali capital. We believe that the Centre must move to Kathmandu in order not to lose sight of its broader objectives of serving the largest region in the world.

In the course of this year, His Majesty's Government of Nepal undertook a number of consultations with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, including one at the level of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, with a view to finalizing the host country agreement. We are optimistic that the Secretariat will soon come forward with an affirmative response in that respect. In the meantime, we would like to urge that the stalled Kathmandu process be revived as soon as possible.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are fully convinced of the significance of the Centre in addressing the security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region. They believe that voluntary contributions will be forthcoming to assist the Centre in its future activities.

Finally, on behalf of the sponsors, my delegation would like to appeal to all member countries to adopt the draft resolution without a vote, as with similar texts in previous years.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Australia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.49.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): On behalf of the sponsors — Argentina, Australia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey — Australia is pleased to introduce to the First Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.49, on the

prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS).

The draft resolution encourages Member States to take concrete steps to exercise effective control over MANPADS, including over their transfer and stockpile security, to prevent MANPADS from falling into the hands of non-State end-users. The draft resolution complements the First Committee's omnibus small-arms draft resolution and ties in with the Committee's goal to address contemporary security concerns.

Non-governmental research, including the *Small Arms Survey 2004*, highlights the serious security problem posed by insdequate State control over MANPADS stockpiles and raises concerns about the possession of MANPADS by non-State end-users. That study emphasizes that current international measures to control proliferation do not go far enough.

The draft resolution does not restrict or address authorized trade between Governments. The sponsors recognize that MANPADS are a legitimate defensive measure used by Governments. The draft resolution is a response to the increasing international concern about the potential use of those weapons by terrorist groups, and especially about the risk they pose to civil aviation. The potential loss of innocent lives and severe economic damage demand action in this forum. The draft resolution takes a practical approach. For example, it encourages initiatives to mobilize resources and technical expertise to assist States requesting assistance to enhance national controls and stockpile-management practices, or to remove surplus stocks.

The sponsors are grateful for the many useful comments and suggestions they received on the draft resolution. The text has been adjusted to take into account many of the views provided during our informal consultations. The sponsors urge all delegations to support this important draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Mali to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.21/Rev.1.

Mr. Kone (Mali) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for my delegation to introduce to the First Committee the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them" (A/C.1/59/L.21/Rev.1) on behalf of the 15 States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. This draft resolution addresses a major disarmament concern of our subregion — and therefore of the whole of Africa.

The draft resolution before the Committee for adoption is an updated version of resolution 58/58, adopted by consensus at the fifty-eighth session. As noted in the preambular part, the submission of this draft resolution arose from the collective awareness in our subregion of the danger posed by small arms to the security of our peoples and the development and stability of our States. Initiatives taken by West Africa, by the African continent and by the United Nations eloquently attest to the great need to better deal with the problem of small arms. The attainment of this goal requires a greater mobilization of States in order to strengthen cooperation to control this phenomenon. In this respect, the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons remains a key proof of the commitment of African States.

The operative part of the resolution welcomes the declaration of a moratorium in this regard and continues to encourage the ECOWAS States to establish national commissions. It calls upon civil society organizations to take an active part in combating small arms and light weapons.

The draft resolution virtually repeats, in form and substance, last year's resolution. It has not undergone any major changes. However, I would draw attention to some new material. First, the new first preambular paragraph recalls the resolution adopted at the previous session. Secondly, the new final preambular paragraph is an update reflecting the new Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons established through General Assembly resolution 58/241. Thirdly, operative paragraph 2 has been somewhat modified. And finally, the final two operative paragraphs make reference to the sixtieth session.

When the General Assembly decided, through its resolution 58/241, to establish the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing small arms and

light weapons, it recognized the magnitude and the complexity of this issue. The Secretary-General also recognized in his report (A/59/181) the priority task of preventing and combating the trade in small arms and light weapons through assistance provided to States and through strengthening their capacities regarding the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The ECOWAS member States accordingly urge the international community to support their efforts to stem the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons.

My delegation, on behalf of the States members of ECOWAS, would like to pay tribute to the spirit of good cooperation demonstrated by the Secretariat and to thank the Department for Disarmament Affairs in particular for its tireless efforts. Allow me to also thank the countries that have always supported this draft resolution. We would like to thank in advance all the delegations that will join us in ensuring that this draft resolution is adopted by consensus by our Committee.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Colombia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour and a pleasure for my delegation to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects". I do so on behalf of Japan, South Africa and the 27 other delegations whose names appear on the document. As of the day before yesterday, they were joined by the delegations of Andorra, Algeria, Australia, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Congo, Djibouti, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

Among its other provisions, this draft resolution, like resolutions 56/24 V, 57/72 and 58/241, emphasizes the importance of early and full implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It welcomes the efforts by Member States to submit, on a voluntary basis, national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action.

As members are aware, this draft resolution builds upon resolution 58/241 of 23 December 2003, which was coordinated by South Africa and which decided the following: first, to convene a United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in New York for a period of two weeks between June and July 2006; secondly, that a session of the preparatory committee for the conference is to be held in New York for a period of two weeks in January 2006 and that, if necessary, a subsequent session may be held; and thirdly, to convene in 2005 the second biennial meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.

Building on this basis, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 sets the dates for each of these events as follows. The 2006 United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action will be held in New York for a period of two weeks between 26 June and 7 July 2006. The preparatory committee for the 2006 conference will hold a two-week session in New York from 9 to 20 January 2006 and, if necessary, a subsequent session of up to two weeks. The second biennial meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action will be held in New York from 11 to 15 July 2005.

As a result of the sixth preambular paragraph of resolution 58/241, which notes with satisfaction the regional efforts being undertaken in support of the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 contains a fourth preambular paragraph which notes with satisfaction subregional efforts and commends the progress that has already been made in this regard. Operative paragraph 6 then reaffirms the importance of those regional and subregional efforts.

With regard to the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, in its sixth preambular paragraph, welcomes its establishment and the convening of its first substantive session in New York from 14 to 25 June 2004. In operative paragraph 4, the draft resolution also expresses appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Chair of the Group, encourages the continued active participation of delegations in the remaining sessions and stresses the importance of

making every effort to ensure that a positive outcome is achieved by the Group.

As members may recall, in section IV, paragraph 1 (d), of the 2001 Programme of Action (see A/CONF.192/15), the States participating in the Conference recommended that the General Assembly "consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons".

Resolution 58/241, adopted last year, addressed this important subject for the first time and requested the Secretary-General to hold consultations on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. In his report this year (A/59/181), the Secretary-General describes the outcome of those consultations. Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 welcomes the consultations in its seventh preambular paragraph and requests their continuation in operative paragraph 5. As members are aware, the informal consultations on the final content of that paragraph continue. That is why, at the end of operative paragraph 5, the words "to be further discussed" appear in square brackets.

As one can see, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 — like the resolutions adopted under this item in 2001, 2002 and 2003 — is action-oriented, with the objective of carrying out an effective follow-up of the 2001 Conference and implementing the Programme of Action. In essence, it is a procedural text that makes operative the agreements reached by consensus at the 2001 Conference. It thus sets the priorities of the international agenda concerning the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons through 2006.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.47 and A/C.1/59/L.46.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): I have requested the floor to introduce two draft resolutions, contained in documents A/C.1/59/L.47 and A/C.1/59/L.46.

First, on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Turkey and my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.47, entitled "Regional disarmament".

Efforts aimed at international security and disarmament need to be pursued at both the regional and international levels. Although international disarmament measures are vital, in most instances security and disarmament can be promoted most effectively at the regional level. As draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.47 notes, guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security were adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993. Those guidelines remain relevant to the promotion of regional disarmament in the conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is now quite evident that, in most areas of tension and potential conflict, the regional approach could offer the most effective basis for promoting disarmament and enhancing security. The draft resolution notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels and expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region and in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, would enhance the security of all States.

The draft resolution therefore stresses the need for sustained efforts, affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and calls upon States to conclude agreements wherever possible. It also welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels and encourages confidence-building measures.

Adoption of this draft resolution will encourage concerned countries to pursue endeavours for regional disarmament and will help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors — including my delegation — hope that, as was the case with a similar text last year, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.47, on regional disarmament, will be adopted without a vote.

I would now like briefly to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.46, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Germany, Nepal, Peru, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and my own delegation.

The draft resolution aims to promote disarmament endeavours in an area that so far has not received due recognition in international disarmament forums: the pursuit of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46 outlines in its preambular part several vital principles and precepts relating to the issue. These include the crucial role of arms control in peace and security, that threats to peace in the post-cold-war era arise mainly among States located in the same region or subregion, that the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments would contribute to peace and stability, that agreements to strengthen regional peace and security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces is a desirable objective, that militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional peace and security, and that an important objective should be to prevent the possibility of military attack launched by surprise and to avoid aggression.

The preambular part of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46 also notes with particular interest the initiatives taken in various regions, including among a number of Latin American countries, and the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia, and recognizes the relevance and value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is described as a cornerstone of European security.

The operative part of the draft resolution, while deciding to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels, requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements. It also requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its next session.

The sponsors express the hope that this draft resolution will be adopted without any objection.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call now on the representative of Sweden, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.54.

Ms. Borslin Bonnier (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.54, on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). I do so on behalf of approximately 60 countries; for the sake of brevity, I will refrain from reading out their names. My delegation is very grateful to all the sponsoring countries for their support, and we hope that many more countries will join us in the coming week — as a few did just a few minutes ago.

It was a great achievement that the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention was able to adopt the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, Protocol V, by consensus in November 2003. We warmly welcome this new legally binding instrument. We call upon all States parties to adhere to it as soon as possible so that it can enter into force. The new Protocol will make a significant contribution towards minimizing the humanitarian consequences caused by explosive remnants of war.

We would also like to express well-deserved support for the ongoing work of the Chairman-designate and the two coordinators. We encourage the Group of Governmental Experts to consider all proposals on mines other than anti-personnel mines put forward since its establishment, with the aim of elaborating appropriate recommendations at the meeting in November. We also encourage the Chairman-designate and the Group to report on the work done on compliance, as well as on the implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law and on possible preventive measures aimed at improving the design of certain specific types of munitions, including sub-munitions.

Let me finally call upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols and to adhere to its provisions, including the important amendment to extend the scope to include armed conflicts of a non-international character.

I hope that the draft resolution, like similar texts in previous years, will be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Thailand to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): It is an honour for my delegation to introduce, on behalf of 120 countries, the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,

Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". In this regard, we wish to thank each and every delegation that helped us to arrive at the present text. The sponsors whose names do not appear on the draft resolution will be reflected at a later stage in the document to be issued by the Secretariat.

Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1 is based mainly on General Assembly resolution 58/53 of 8 December 2003; it has been updated to reflect developments since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, held last year in Bangkok. In the light of our current efforts to reform the First Committee's work, particularly in accordance with paragraph 6 of section B of the annex to resolution 58/126, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", which calls for more concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions, we have merged last year's sixth to tenth preambular paragraphs into one single paragraph, which appears as the sixth preambular paragraph in this draft resolution. We thank the host countries of all the past Meetings of States Parties for agreeing to this merged paragraph.

We have also included new elements to reflect developments over the past year. In the preambular part, we recall the preparatory process for the First Review Conference, which will be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004, in recognition of the tremendous work carried out under the guidance of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, President-designate of the First Review Conference. We also welcome the regional seminars that have been held in different parts of the world over the past year, in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Lithuania, Romania, Tajikistan and Thailand, to name a few. The seminars were not limited to States Parties to the Convention, but they also had the participation of numerous States not parties to the Convention and were of practical use in exchange of information, experiences and best practices in mine action. They also served as a solid groundwork for the First Review Conference.

Another new element in the preambular part is the increased recognition of the need to integrate mine action into international and national development programmes and strategies. In that regard, we welcome the developments that have taken place since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, including the 20 September 2004 meeting between the Foreign Minister of Thailand, as President of the Fifth Meeting, and the President of the World Bank, which contributed to a possible partnership between the mine action community and the World Bank. We thank, among others, Canada, Japan, Norway, Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Switzerland, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines for their active role in this regard.

One last new element in the preambular part of the draft resolution is an update on the number of States parties to the Convention, which now stands at 143 countries; we hope that more will be joining in the near future.

As the First Review Conference is approaching, in the operative part of the draft resolution we encourage all interested States, United Nations agencies, other relevant organizations and institutions, regional organizations, the ICRC and relevant non-governmental organizations to attend the First Review Conference at the highest possible level and to maintain a high level of participation in the subsequent Meetings of States Parties and their inter-sessional work programme. We also request the Secretary-General to undertake preparations necessary to convene the next Meeting of States Parties.

We hope that draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1 will enjoy wide support, as a similar text did last year. We are grateful to all the sponsors, and we encourage those countries that have not yet joined the Convention but that share its humanitarian objectives to also consider sponsoring and supporting the draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Germany, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.38.

Mr. Wolter (Germany): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", contained in document A/C.1/59/L.38.

In addition to the 79 sponsors already listed in document A/C.1/59/L.38, a further 19 countries so far have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. I should like to express our appreciation and thanks to all those countries, and especially to Angola, Benin, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the

Philippines, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste and Uganda, which have joined the group of sponsors for the first time this year. Furthermore, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all other countries that will sign up for sponsorship in the coming days. Again, this sponsorship bridges the usual regional group lines and involves Member States of virtually all regions of the globe in the noble endeavour to consolidate peace through practical disarmament measures.

Practical disarmament measures are still a relatively new item on the United Nations agenda. The international community is aware, more now than ever before, of the importance of such measures, especially with regard to the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons, which pose a threat to peace and security and reduce the prospects for economic development in many regions, particularly in post-conflict situations.

A shining example of the success of practical disarmament is the Albania project, initiated by the Group of Interested States, and which has led to the collection and destruction of more than 100,000 small arms in that region. We will build on best practices to enhance the capacities of the international community to replicate these successes.

A comprehensive and integrated approach to practical disarmament measures is key to maintaining and consolidating peace and security and thus provides a basis for effective post-conflict peace-building. Practical disarmament measures as part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes will complement and strengthen United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. This year's draft resolution contains a new operative paragraph to emphasize the importance of including in United Nations-mandated peacekeeping missions practical disarmament measures aimed at addressing the problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in conjunction with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. This will contribute to an integrated and effective management strategy as part of a sustainable peace-building process.

Furthermore, the draft resolution for the first time welcomes the synergies within the multi-stakeholder process, including Governments, the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations and institutions as well as non-governmental organizations, in support of practical disarmament measures and the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons in particular, inter alia through the Coordinating Action on Small Arms within the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

Germany is honoured by the confidence placed in it by so many sponsors. We will do our utmost to promote the implementation of practical disarmament measures within the Group of Interested States. At its most recent meeting, on 1 October, the Group — with an unprecedented attendance of nearly 100 delegations and United Nations representatives — initiated a number of regional projects, with the Arab League, for instance, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as in Central Africa. For the upcoming meeting in December, we will include projects in Latin America in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Lima, together with civil society.

Finally, active involvement in the work of the Group can be a good way to demonstrate continued support for practical disarmament and to show that the United Nations and its Member States can make a difference on the ground to help achieve a safer world. Germany is confident that the international community has the courage, energy and perseverance to take on the challenges of practical disarmament in conflict-ridden regions where the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and practical disarmament measures are as urgent as ever.

As in previous years, we have sought to produce a draft resolution that will again be adopted without a vote. We invite all delegations to join this consensus.

Mr. Yao (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I am taking the floor not to introduce a draft resolution but to express Côte d'Ivoire's views on conventional weapons. I would beg your indulgence in that respect, Mr. Chairman.

For reasons of diplomatic convenience, conventional weapons do not receive the kind of attention given to weapons of mass destruction, inter alia nuclear weapons, to which we, the peoples of the United Nations, have given a high priority. Current dire circumstances have caused attention to be focused on conventional weapons, yet such attention is not nearly

commensurate with the magnitude of their destructive potential.

Weapons of mass destruction pose the threat of tremendous devastation, but conventional weapons have gone beyond the level of a mere threat; they sow destruction every day, every minute, every second. Indeed, since the beginning of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, conventional arms have killed thousands of people the world over and shattered millions of families. They have permanently mutilated the bodies of hundreds of millions of human beings and inflicted long-term trauma on the psyches of many millions of others. They have forced millions of people into exile and endless international migration and into overcrowded, makeshift refugee camps. They have had irreversible effects on the social organization of many tribes that have had negative impacts on the States concerned. They have caused and continue to cause terrible social and sociological tragedies. They are truly also weapons of mass destruction, as the representative of Sierra Leone so aptly put it in his important statement. Clearly, we must pay them at least as much attention as we do to what are, by convention, called weapons of mass destruction.

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire has for more than a decade now experienced the painful consequences of the many conflicts affecting West Africa. Fortunately, these crises are currently in the process of settlement, thanks to the generous and persistent support of the international community, to which my delegation once again expresses its appreciation.

Côte d'Ivoire, aware of the seriousness of the consequences of the illicit production, stockpiling, import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, is a party to all international instruments aimed at the control and monitoring, at the State level, of the full life-cycle of these weapons. We therefore welcome the growing success of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We welcome also the increase in the number of ratifications of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, the inclusion of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the adoption last year of Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Nonetheless, the war and its consequences have compelled Côte d'Ivoire to consider these realities. The first is that adherence by our States to these instruments is not yet universal. Secondly, the implementation, at the national and regional level, of international control and monitoring agreements on conventional weapons is not at the level of adherence. And thirdly, agreements that are termed "politically binding" are clearly insufficient. That is why my delegation appeals once again to those States that are hesitant to participate in certain conventional arms control instruments and to take measures to hasten the universalization of those instruments and the contribution of our States to the Register of Conventional Arms.

The recent terrible experience of Côte d'Ivoire has prompted my delegation to advocate the transformation of our politically binding agreements into legally binding agreements under United Nations control. That is why we support the proposal to negotiate a legally binding international instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, munitions and associated explosives. We welcome the efforts of Ambassador Tholozana and assure him of our full support.

Lastly, among other subjects of concern to my delegation, we would mention the humanitarian, economic and environmental damage caused by mines other than anti-personnel mines. My delegation supports the work of the Coordinator in this field and assures him of its full readiness to cooperate. It is in that context that Côte d'Ivoire is co-sponsoring most draft resolutions relating to disarmament.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now begin consideration of the next thematic segment, in which we will hear statements on regional disarmament, confidence-building measures, other disarmament measures and disarmament machinery.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have asked for the floor to make a short statement under the thematic segment on regional security. Two draft resolutions have already been submitted under this item: draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.8, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, and draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.37, on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Russia is seriously concerned at the disturbing developments in the Middle East. The continuing increase in tension in the region does serious damage to all parties to the conflict and to the efforts to find a settlement to the Middle East question.

We believe that a comprehensive approach must be adopted to ensure stability in that region. In that context, we support the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. We also believe that implementation of that proposal would help ensure the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and promote Israel's accession to the Treaty.

Overall, we think it is necessary for the international community to take more robust action to prevent a worst-case scenario and to take practical steps to promote the process of a peaceful settlement. We believe that the road map of the Quartet of international mediators, which has been endorsed by all parties, needs to be implemented immediately.

Mr. Al-Busaidi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election. We are certain that your diplomatic and negotiating skills will ensure the success of our work and will help us achieve consensus. My delegation stands ready to cooperate with you and with all other delegations to attain that goal. I also take this opportunity to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his valuable statement before the First Committee, which covered a number of issues that merit the Committee's attention and consideration.

My delegation has taken the floor on the theme of regional disarmament. There is no doubt that there is a close link between regional disarmament and international peace and security; the two are complementary. Here, Oman does not hide its concern at the critical security situation in the Middle East.

In the light of the circumstances, we wish to state that our country will not slacken in its sincere efforts to create a climate of security and stability in the region. That is clearly reflected in our Government's having acceded to all major international conventions relating to disarmament — the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — and in all the other initiatives that have been and will be taken by my country in this area.

However, we would like to voice our concern that one single State in the region, Israel, remains outside the sphere of our regional collective security. Israel remains outside the non-proliferation regime, which is a basis for international peace and security. That situation is abnormal, and, unless it is dealt with responsibly and seriously, it will continue to pose a threat to international peace and security.

As can be seen, the Arab States have repeatedly proposed initiatives, most importantly calling for making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The Arab States are convinced of the seriousness and fragility of the security situation in the region. Accordingly, we have submitted to the Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.37, which calls on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to accede to the NPT and to submit all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, like most other countries in the world.

Unfortunately, all such efforts have been in vain. What is worse, some States even avoid mentioning Israel in the First Committee. That is disturbing, and we are surprised to see it happen, as it does not make possible an accurate and responsible consideration of the purposes and principles of the Organization or the provisions of the NPT. As well, it runs counter to the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

Our interpretation of the outcome of the 1995 Review Conference as it relates to the Middle East is a clear one, based on the unlimited extension of the Treaty being contingent on progress in making the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. Countries that have not acceded to the NPT should review their position. Because Israel remains outside the NPT regime, it poses a threat to regional and international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to cite Mr. Abe's statement earlier in this session, in which he said that adopting draft resolutions should not be an end in itself. The proliferation of draft resolutions is pointless if they are not implemented.

Mr. Altunaiji (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, I would like to make

a statement on the item on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

The Middle East is one of the major regions of tension not only because of Israel's continued occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and its refusal to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also because of its insistence on maintaining a highly advanced arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. That is a source of grave danger and concern with respect not only to the security and stability of neighbouring States and peoples, but also to that of the region and the world as a whole.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns Israel's nuclear-weapon development policy and reiterates its appeal to the international community to take all necessary measures to put pressure on the Israeli Government to implement the requirements set out in the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council and the General Assembly, which call for it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as all the other States of the region have done. It should submit its entire nuclear arsenal and all of its fissile materials to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in accordance with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference. That resolution also stressed the universality of the Treaty. In this connection, we would like to highlight a number of issues.

First, Israel must cooperate with the IAEA by declaring all of its nuclear facilities and submitting them to Agency safeguards. We also call upon Israel to immediately desist from stockpiling any fissile materials or other materials that can be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. It should immediately cease all nuclear testing and dismantle all of its nuclear programmes. All States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, should abide by their obligations, as set out in the relevant international resolutions, to halt all technical, financial and scientific support and assistance leading to the further updating and modernizing of weapons of mass destruction.

Current international conditions require strenuous efforts aimed at the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. If that is achieved, it will contribute greatly to alleviating tension and instability in the region. It will pave the way for renewing dialogue and returning to peace negotiations, with a view to arriving at a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the Middle East. That would in turn enhance the stability and peace of all of our peoples and of the region as a whole.

Mr. Lew (Republic of Korea): In the view of my delegation, in addressing specific regional concerns in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, a tailored approach can be effective, as it reflects specific regional considerations and interests. In that regard, we agree that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific plays an important role in fostering an environment of cooperation and understanding among countries in the region. In particular, the Republic of Korea supports the role of the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre as a useful vehicle for the promotion of dialogue and regional security and disarmament issues. We will continue to extend our political and financial support to the Regional Centre in order to strengthen its role and activities.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to state that the Republic of Korea, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Centre, will host an international disarmament conference, in Cheju island, from 6 to 8 December this year, for the third consecutive year since 2002. The meeting, based on the theme of how to address challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, will discuss such topical issues as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Shlema (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Conventional arms control has lost none of its relevance. On the contrary, it is increasing in importance at the regional and subregional levels. The proliferation of conventional weapons in a given region and the absence of effective control and verification mechanisms in and of themselves pose a threat to international peace and stability. The growth of tension in a region, together with the uncontrolled transfer of arms and military technologies, can lead to armed conflict, which can spread to other regions.

The Republic of Belarus believes that confidence-building measures constitute a key element of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. The main objective of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms control is to strengthen regional security as an active component of international security and to reduce the risk of armed conflict. The development of confidence-building measures can help to reduce misunderstanding and the danger inherent in failing to properly assess military activities. Such measures can prevent military confrontation and reduce the risk of a sudden attack or outbreak of war as a result of a military incident by creating a regional climate in which the importance of the military element is consistently reduced. Confidence-building measures can promote a balanced arms reduction and disarmament process and provide for the more effective functioning of a verification regime.

We welcome the conclusion by certain countries of appropriate bilateral and multilateral confidence-building agreements in the military and political areas, and we call upon other States to support initiatives to reach such agreements on confidence-building measures in the area of regional and subregional conventional arms control. In the creation and subsequent development of confidence-building measures in the military and political area, we believe that the best approach would be one that allowed for flexibility in attaining common interests in the area of security and arms control in the region concerned.

In this process, guarantees must be provided with regard to the inalienable right of States to an adequate level of security, on the understanding that no State or group of States parties to any agreement on confidence-building measures should seek to gain an advantage over another party at any stage of the implementation and development of such an agreement.

One outcome of our active cooperation with neighbouring States is the formation of a zone of good-neighbourly relations and security in the border regions of Belarus. Agreements for supplementary confidence-building measures were also concluded in 2004 with Latvia and Poland. We view those agreements as a major contribution to the strengthening of regional and common European security system.

I would like once again to highlight the important role played by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), which is a key element of European security policy. The Republic of Belarus participated actively in the negotiating process to adapt that Treaty to the new geopolitical conditions in Europe and was one of the first States to ratify the Treaty Adaptation Agreement in 2000. The adapted Treaty symbolizes a shift away from the old relations that prevailed in Europe during the cold war, which were characterized by bloc confrontation, to a new relationship, based on cooperation and trust. The Adaptation Agreement has also made it possible to open the door to accession by new States.

The Republic of Belarus is in favour of the speedy entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty and of accession to it by new members. We believe that that would make it possible to conclude the process of creating a new European security architecture with a view to increasing the strength and transparency of arms control in Europe. It would also set a good example for States in other areas of the world.

In that connection, we urge other States parties to the CFE Treaty that have not yet ratified the Adaptation Agreement to do so as soon as possible. We also support the idea of considering, at the Conference on Disarmament, the question of developing principles that could serve as a basis for regional agreements on conventional arms control.

We stress the consistency of our policy in the area of international security and arms control. Because of this, the Republic of Belarus, as with similar texts in the past, has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels".

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to express my delegation's utmost support for the work being done by the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and to its Director, Mr. Péricles Gasparini, for the enormous progress achieved, inter alia, in training, information, documentation, equipment and workshops, to help the countries of the region in meeting their goals of peace and development.

Among other activities, the Centre has supported measures taken by the Central American countries for the implementation of the Central American Project for

the Control of Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons, endorsed on 19 December 2003 by the leaders of the subregion at the Central American Integration System Summit, held in Belize. Among the objectives of the Central American project is to move forward in harmonizing our legislation in this area, in accordance with existing regional concepts, and to build consensus among States and an awareness of the need to strengthen international controls on transfers of small arms and light weapons, in preparation for the next United Nations review conference on small arms and light weapons, to be held in 2006.

In this context, we greatly appreciate the United Kingdom initiative to move towards stricter control of transfers of small arms and light weapons. This is completely consistent with our regional strategy to prevent and combat arms trafficking, on the basis of the United Nations Programme of Action. The United Kingdom and the Government of Nicaragua, the headquarters country of the Central American Project, have joined efforts, and in Managua, on 7 and 8 October 2004, held a Central American workshop on transit, import and export controls on small arms and light weapons. The workshop set important guidelines for continued work by the Central American countries at the national, regional and global levels. Included were the urgent need for our Governments to achieve consensus in the establishment of simple, transparent and effective joint control mechanisms for arms transfers, and the identification of regional priorities in training, technical assistance and financing for project implementation, based on the diverse needs of the region.

We reaffirmed that multilateral cooperation, based on the principles of shared responsibility, is essential to confront the problems before us. Central American countries reached consensus regarding regional mechanisms for harmonizing views and action in order to formulate a legal approach to controlling the import, export and transit of small arms and light weapons.

We concluded that we need to make much more progress in adapting internal legislation to the provisions of international instruments to which we have acceded, and to make progress in harmonizing, at the regional level, our national laws so that we will have a coherent, modern legislative basis on which to improve controls and to confront the consequences of the production and illicit traffic in firearms and other weapons.

All those results were achieved thanks to the good will and determination of the many institutions, public officials and citizens who understand the importance of complete information and open, transparent discussion of existing problems in order to achieve the controls needed to prevent and eliminate the illicit trade in weapons.

It is hard to believe that the workshop could have obtained all the information it needed without the cooperation and resolve of the Central American countries, which are concerned about achieving the goal of a Central America that is safe, at peace and fully developed — or without all the countries that have supported us in one way or another, without the United Kingdom and Sweden, without the representatives of international organizations, and without technical assistance from the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the basis of the United Nations Programme of Action, all of those partners are fulfilling their mandate to fostering development in the region by helping us strengthen our institutions.

We acknowledge that the research presented by non-governmental organizations and independent experts will be very useful to the region. It shows the enormous impact of the firearms that circulate in our societies.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) on the cluster 6, on confidence-building measures. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU strongly supports the establishment of confidence- and security-building measures as an instrument to create transparency and, hence, to overcome mistrust, misunderstandings and miscalculations, especially in situations and areas of tension. European countries have highly benefited from the confidence-building measures and confidence- and

security-building measures that were introduced in Europe, in particular through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe/Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe process. In other regions of the world, confidence-building measures have played and can in future play an important role, especially in areas of tension and in all phases of a crisis or conflict, including the post-conflict phase. The EU is interested in closer cooperation with other regions in this field.

The diversity in confidence-building measures and confidence- and security-building measures is extensive. EU member States actively participate in transparency measures in the various multilateral forums, as well as in several verification mechanisms.

At the global level, in the United Nations several very useful confidence-building measures, such as the Register of Conventional Arms, the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures and the database on legislation concerning arms transfers, are in place. All those instruments have proven to increase confidence between States.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the able manner in which you have conducted the chairmanship of the First Committee thus far and to assure you of our full support and cooperation in steering the remainder of the work of the Committee.

The Dutch presidency of the European Union has already delivered a statement on confidence-building measures. I would like to take this opportunity, however, to call attention to certain developments which are of particular importance to my delegation, with regard to initiatives of my Government over the past year in the field of confidence-building.

In the year since its ratification of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, the Republic of Cyprus has proceeded to implement its commitments under the Convention. In December 2003 alone, 4,000 stockpiled anti-personnel mines were destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the Ottawa Convention. Our endeavour to fully comply with the Ottawa Convention is not the sole driving force behind those actions by my Government. As a matter of principle and priority, our aim is to avail ourselves of the broader horizons that the Convention opens up in the direction of further promoting confidence-building measures, despite the continuing occupation of a significant part of Cyprus's territory.

Utilizing the extensive possibilities offered by ongoing developments, and with a view to defusing the situation on the ground and minimizing its potentially explosive character, the Government of Cyprus has proceeded with the extension of the — so far — unilateral demining process it initiated exactly one year ago. Furthermore, and in the context of confidence-building, we have recently proposed the withdrawal of military forces from sensitive areas and the abstention from military exercises in those areas.

The Republic of Cyprus has also put forward a proposal to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for clearing all minefields within the United Nations Buffer Zone — both those of the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus and those of the Turkish forces. While a positive response from the other side is still pending, the Government of Cyprus has indicated its willingness to proceed unilaterally with the clearing of National Guard minefields within the Buffer Zone, in cooperation with UNFICYP. To that end, the United Nations Mine Action Service has already conducted an on-site investigation of the minefields within the Buffer Zone and has prepared a technical mission report outlining the practical steps required for the actual demining process. Moreover, and in accordance with an agreement concluded between the Government of Cyprus and UNFICYP last June, UNFICYP has begun setting up the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the aforementioned project. The National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus has already established a specialized mine action centre that will provide technical assistance during the demining process. The project for demining the Buffer Zone, which is expected to begin in the next few months, will be financed mainly by the European Union, which has already allocated €2.5 million to initiate the project.

We will continue assessing and considering our possibilities and will be ready to implement further steps in the direction just outlined. We hope that Cyprus will prove to be a successful case study, epitomizing the value of confidence-building measures and their wider implications, which transcend the boundaries of practical disarmament measures and have the potential to alter the parameters of conflict situations. We firmly believe that confidence-building

is an important factor in fostering the conditions for political processes aimed at the settlement of disputes.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to highlight the commitment to international peace and security of the countries members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries Bolivia, Chile and Peru. For cooperation in this field is an indispensable tool to achieve the integrated economic, political and social development of all peoples.

In that regard, we welcome the results achieved during the Organization of American States Special Conference on Hemispheric Security, held in Mexico City in October 2003. In the Conference's Declaration on Security in the Americas, the States of the region affirmed that

> "Confidence- and security-building measures and transparency in defence and security policies contribute to increasing stability, safeguarding hemispheric and international peace and security and consolidating democracy".

The countries of MERCOSUR and associated countries will continue to carry out joint military exercises among ourselves and in conjunction with other countries of the region. Likewise, we will continue developing bilateral initiatives that help build mutual confidence and enhance cooperation. Examples include the Common Standardized Methodology for the Measurement of Defence Spending prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), at the request of Argentina and Chile, whose working group met on 6 August 2004, and the Argentina-Bolivia Standing Security Committee, which met for the first time on 30 September 2004. We also welcome Argentina's ratification in March 2004 of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which has been in force since November 2002.

Finally, the countries of MERCOSUR and associated countries would like to recall our sponsorship of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.52, entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", as a contribution to strengthening dialogue on that important issue within the framework of the United Nations.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): As part of the effort to use our thematic debate to foster an exchange of views on specific issues of significance for disarmament and security, I wish to speak this morning on the topic of verification and compliance, which is a crucial underpinning of international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament accords.

In order to persuade States to freely accept certain constraints on their behaviour as part of an international accord, it has long been recognized that one must be able to assure them that others are also abiding by the obligations set out in the mutual agreement. A good encapsulation of that concept, as well as of the interrelationship between verification and compliance, was set out in principle 11 of the 16 verification principles, which reads:

> "Adequate and effective verification arrangements must be capable of providing, in a timely fashion, clear and convincing evidence of compliance or non-compliance. Continued confirmation of compliance is an essential ingredient to building and maintaining confidence among the parties." (*A/S-15/3, para. 60*)

Developing the right verification approach to a given non-proliferation, arms control or disarmament challenge is not a simple task; nor is there a universal template that can be applied. Solutions will differ according to the specific case. In our view, however, one constant in the realm of multilateral agreements is an objective process that provides States parties with the information necessary to make substantiated judgements regarding compliance by other States parties. Ideally, such a verification capacity should be linked to a process for resolving disputes about compliance and taking remedial action to correct non-compliance.

Verification is a dynamic field in which practical experience, technology and diplomatic instruments are changing and developing. Think of the impressive capacities of the International Monitoring System of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization or the expanded coverage of International Atomic Energy Agency inspections under the additional protocols. We consider verification to be a field in which increased exchange of information, dedicated research and development programmes and creative institutional thinking should be pursued for the benefit of the international

community. We would also like to see the First Committee and the United Nations as a whole pay more attention to issues of verification and compliance as one way in which to promote synergies among the multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regimes.

A decade or more ago, expert groups established by the Committee contributed to the study of verification and its implications for the United Nations. More recently, the Disarmament Advisory Board offered views and recommendations relevant to this field. We believe that the further consideration of this topic in the United Nations context is warranted with a view to identifying future contributions or capabilities that would be complementary to current arrangements. Hence our proposal for soliciting the views of Member States in 2005 as input to a panel of Government experts to be established in 2006 to examine the issue of verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations — a proposal designed to advance collective thinking on this subject.

Mr. Bar (Israel), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Nationally, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is reviving research activity in the field of verification and compliance, and recently undertook a scoping study that compiled the views of a wide range of experts regarding existing problems and possible solutions. At the political level, the Canadian Prime Minister has spoken to the General Assembly about the role that verification can play in strengthening our multilateral systems and about the need to deal effectively with cases of non-compliance. Given that compliance concerns, if left unaddressed, can undermine international peace and security, we all have a stake in doing what is within our means and our mandate to contribute to the effectiveness of verification and compliance under the international accords that concern us all.

In the opinion of my delegation, it would be useful to include the topic of verification and compliance as a distinct part of our thematic debate timetable. Currently, we are obliged to raise that topic under the clusters of confidence-building and/or disarmament machinery — to which it definitely relates — but it really merits a sub-item of its own.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As members are aware, Switzerland has always attached great importance to the implementation of obligations emanating from treaties or other instruments. Verification is a central element in terms of the credibility of such treaties and instruments. Verification is not just a means of control, but also a gauge of confidence and transparency and a means of assessing allegations of non-compliance.

That is why my country has always supported verification measures and their effective implementation. We actively support the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We are also pleased that an effective verification system has been established within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development concerning conventional stockpiles and military activities. We have made experts and construction teams available to the operations of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in Iraq. Switzerland has always advocated a verification protocol within the framework of the Biological (Toxin) Weapons Convention. We are convinced that a future fissile material cut-off treaty would be stronger and more credible with an effective verification system.

Switzerland holds the position that we must maintain the capacity and expertise of the United Nations — particularly within UNMOVIC — while respecting the fact that other organizations and treaties have been established and function well. We need to identify the shortcomings and complementarities of existing systems and to draw the necessary conclusions.

In the light of the current challenges, and in the absence of major progress in the disarmament negotiations, it is more important than ever before to preserve what has been achieved. Verification remains, in our view, an essential pillar of the international peace and security architecture. That is why Switzerland supports draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.33, introduced by the delegation of Canada.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We should like to make a brief statement under the theme of other disarmament measures in the context of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.31, proposed by India and entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction".

The escalation of international terrorism means that the international community must take adequate measures to reliably cut off terrorists' access to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). As was stated at the 8th plenary meeting of the General Assembly by Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Russia is prepared to engage in very close partnership in that area.

We can deal with terrorists only on a multilateral basis, by combining our efforts and working together in solidarity. Our country was one of the initiators of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and we are a party to the Proliferation Security Initiative and a sponsor of the Group of Eight Action Plan on Non-Proliferation. We have proposed a series of concrete, purely practical steps to help the world community strengthen the international legal basis for combating terrorism and make it a uniform foundation for everyone so that the laws of each Member State are consonant with international law and with the laws of other Member States.

Within the United Nations, at the initiative of the Russian Federation, work is under way on a draft international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. The discussions on that document show that there is now much greater understanding of the need for the swift adoption of such a draft convention, since the measures it describes could serve as a real and powerful way to deter terrorists who seek to gain access to nuclear materials. In our view, the danger of WMD terrorism can be neutralized by eliminating the breeding ground for terrorism, further universalizing national and multilateral non-proliferation regimes, strengthening international verification instruments and introducing safe technologies for nuclear energy production in States that renounce excessive arsenals and military programmes that could undermine the military and political balance and could thereby provoke an arms race.

In the light of those considerations, I should like to express our support for the draft resolution introduced by the representative of India on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of that important and urgent draft resolution would assist us in our common efforts to combat international terrorism.

Ms. Fegante (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to speak on the theme of the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control. The Government of the Argentine Republic observes environmental standards in implementing its disarmament and arms control agreements. Over the past year, preventive measures with regard to environmental impact were taken in the destruction of stockpiled firearms and anti-personnel mines.

First, two processes for the destruction of firearms were used, destroying a total of 12,265 items. In conformity with existing legislation, the destruction methods employed conformed with the recommended environmental norms. Steel weapons were melted in electric melting furnaces, and weapons made of antimony alloys were melted with the addition of slag at high temperatures.

Secondly, on 4 December 2003, with the destruction of the last 20 units, the final phase of the national plan for the destruction of the stocks of anti-personnel mines held by the armed forces was completed. A total of 89,764 anti-personnel mines have thus been destroyed, in fulfilment of our disarmament obligations under article IV of the Ottawa Convention on landmines.

The various stages of planning and implementation of the national plan incorporated a number of measures for preventing environmental damage. First, as part of safeguards against possible accidents in the transport, handling and destruction of explosive materials, the relevant national legislation was complied with. Destruction was carried out in outdoor detonations. Following that method, military camps where munitions have regularly been destroyed were selected so that only land that had already suffered an environmental impact was used. In that context, it should be noted that within those camps, wasteland areas were generally used. Their high-salt-content soil is able to immobilize toxic elements released by the explosion; there is little or no vegetation; and they are extensive in size. This facilitates the temporary migration of local fauna to alternative habitats and thus diminishes the impact on wildlife. In areas adjacent to detonation sites, livestock was removed to the distances recommended by competent veterinarian personnel.

In addition, the choice of primary explosive, based on the advice of the Escuela Superior Técnica, took into account the need to have a high explosive charge that would generate the smallest possible quantity of residue. The maximum detonation charges were determined based on the limitations of each site and in compliance with recommendations derived from seismographic studies. The design of the shafts and the placement of the primary explosive ensured that there would be no discharge of explosive material, thus preventing adjacent terrain from becoming contaminated.

Finally, during on-site operations, adjacent land was prepared, and fire control systems were made ready to prevent the outbreak of fires.

We realize that this statement was a little technical, but we felt it was important because this is the first time that we have presented information on this subject. We believe it is a practical issue that could be of interest to all delegations.

Ms. Borslin Bonnier (Sweden): I wish to make some remarks about my Government's support for the development of a standing verification, inspection and analysis capacity within the United Nations with regard to weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that treaty-based solutions are and should be the norm. The treaties are our first line of defence in all such cases, but we should recognize that there are shortcomings and that there is a need for enhanced tools at the global level. That, I think, is very much recognized in the treaties themselves. For example, in the context of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) grants the Board of Governors the power to put cases of non-compliance before the Security Council and the General Assembly. States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention also have the power to bring such cases before the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can also bring non-compliance cases directly to the General Assembly and the Security Council. And, as we all know, the Security Council itself has addressed the issue of weapons of mass destruction many times and has defined the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a threat to international peace and security. As I recall, that was first done in a presidential statement (S/23500) in 1992.

What Sweden would like to see developed is a better United Nations capacity to meet such possible challenges. We would like to see — and I underline this — not a new cumbersome and large bureaucracy, but a simple roster of highly qualified experts that would be available to the United Nations — and at short notice. For some such experts, we could draw on existing expertise within the Organization and also within Member States.

We feel that making available such a standing capacity would enhance the legitimacy of the United Nations and its credibility with respect to verification and analysis of issues of this kind. It could be used in cases of non-compliance that have gone beyond the treaty arrangements themselves. It could be a place to turn to for countries that feel that they are being accused of being in breach of weapons of mass destruction agreements, and it can be a place countries can turn to if they feel that, for whatever reason, they want to change and come clean and to make a legitimate demonstration of their change of policy.

We feel that such a capacity could be very easily arranged. We feel that the international community would gain from this, particularly countries that have not fully developed their own technical means in this respect.

Mr. Stephens (Australia): In Australia's view, delegations should give careful consideration to the current state of the multilateral disarmament machinery and to realistic opportunities for revitalizing it. We are all aware of the problems in the Conference on Disarmament and in the Disarmament Commission — bodies that, when functioning are two essential components of the disarmament machinery — and the reasons why those forums have been unable to do substantive work for some time. We see no value in dwelling on those problems.

Leaving aside those two bodies, however, there are ways in which we can improve the effectiveness of the multilateral disarmament machinery. The Australian delegation is gratified to see the way in which the First Committee is embracing the initiative to improve its methods of work. We have seen substantive improvements introduced over the past two General Assembly sessions in that regard, leading to the more efficient operation of the Committee.

We support the drive to introduce an interactive component to our discussion and to adjust the agenda to make it more relevant to contemporary security concerns. We would be pleased to see even greater use made of relevant international and non-governmental organizations, whose participation in Committee debates adds value to our work. We acknowledge, of course, that such initiatives must proceed on the basis of consensus, at a speed with which all delegations are comfortable.

We are pleased to see many delegations heeding the call to introduce shorter, more streamlined, action-oriented draft resolutions. We believe that it would be timely for sponsors to consider also the value they get from — and, often, the administrative burden they impose by — requesting the views of Member States via various draft resolutions. With so many such requests made and, in some cases, little value gained from the ensuing reports, it is little wonder that the Member State response rate is so low.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

We also believe that there is a preponderance of requests for groups of governmental experts. If the issue is mature enough, such groups can be a useful and productive way of taking forward the consideration of important disarmament and security matters. If not, they can be unproductive and can impose a large financial and human-resource burden on the United Nations. Australia would be comfortable placing mandatory limits on the number of groups of governmental experts agreed upon each year. There could also be alternative ways to take forward particular issues, for example by referring them to other United Nations groups, such as the Disarmament Commission, for discussion. This action could serve the dual purpose of revitalizing discussion within the Disarmament Commission and saving the Secretariat the burden of establishing an ever-increasing number of groups of governmental experts.

Ms. Fogante (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like now to speak on agenda item 65 (r) entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", and 60, entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security".

The Government of the Argentine Republic welcomes the Security Council's decision to play an active role in the fight against the threat posed by the possibility of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) represents an important advance in ensuring international peace and security. It further consolidates the comprehensive approach being taken to the problem, building on the actions undertaken in 2001, with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee under the auspices of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraphs 3 and 4 of Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Government of the Argentine Republic reported on the international instruments, legislation and procedures in force for the exchange of information and for ensuring the coordination of national, subregional, regional and international efforts to combat that threat. In this regard, the Argentine Republic, as a State that does not possess weapons of mass destruction, has adopted a number of measures to regulate the transfer of materials that may be used for the manufacture of such weapons, thereby preventing their diversion to non-State actors.

Argentina is a party to international instruments regulating the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, including the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Argentina also participates in the following export control regimes: the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Zanger Committee, the Missile Technologies Control Regime and the Australia Group.

The provisions, guidelines and criteria approved in those international instruments have been incorporated into out domestic legislation through decree 603/92 and complementary provisions, which establish controls on the transfer of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and missile material, equipment, technologies, technical assistance and services. The decree also establishes a national commission for the control of sensitive exports and military materiel, consisting of the various State agencies and bodies concerned with the regulation of the materials in question.

The commission has the power to grant export licenses, import certificates and delivery confirmation certificates. Export applications are analysed on a case-by-case basis, and decisions are taken on the basis of

Argentina's firm commitment to non-proliferation and in the context of current international realities, as well as the domestic and regional context of the destination country.

The Argentine Government firmly believes that export control regimes, together with the universalization of international disarmament instruments, represent a first step towards preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. For that reason, our country would welcome the international community's achievement of the universalization of those instruments, with a view to coordinating responses to this growing threat.

Turning to advances in information and telecommunications in the context of international security, the Argentine Republic believes that the issue of information security involves a number of problems, whose resolution represents a real challenge because of their growing complexity — a result of the technological advances themselves.

The main problems can be divided into three categories: attacks targeting the information itself; misuse of information resources; and cyber-crime. With respect to information, new technologies make it increasingly difficult to ensure confidentiality, integrity and availability — the three principal characteristics of information. At the same time, with regard to the problems of information itself, there are two main areas which require special treatment: personal information, which must be administered with the greatest care in order to preserve individual privacy; and information relating to organizations — whether commercial or industrial organizations, or public bodies or agencies — the dissemination, modification or loss of which might be prejudicial to the achievement of economic, social or political objectives.

Another problem, which is often underestimated, is the misuse of computer-based resources: their use for purposes other than those authorized, or the abuse or wasteful use of those resources. For example, the mass spreading of viruses and other kinds of interference through the Internet, with all the necessary countermeasures that that involves, results in additional expenses that far outstrip any original costs.

Lastly, new technologies are providing new opportunities for crime — both crimes that might be regarded as traditional, which exploit new technologies, and new forms of crime that result directly from technological advances.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the adjournment of the formal part of this meeting, we shall proceed to an informal exchange of views, with the participation of Under-Secretary-General Abe and the Directors of the three regional centres for disarmament.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.